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But, when the links were closely twined,
 As if their strength could never part,
 Love broke their spell and left behind
 The ruins of a broken heart—
 Then hour by hour thy beauty's ray,
 In silent sorrow waned away,
 Far in thy inmost mind's recess,
 Had sunk the pangs of deep distress,
 And rankling there it inly dwelt,
 Unknown—untold—yet strongly felt ;
 For never sigh, nor murmur rose,
 To tell the anguish of thy woes ;
 Yet even thy very silence told,
 Far more than words could e'er unfold—
 Of grief too dread—of heart too proud,
 Though broken thus, and then forsaken—
 To tell its weakness to the crowd,
 Or pity's chilling sigh awaken !
 But who could gaze upon that eye,
 Nor learn thy secret history ?
 So fixed, so cold, it seems to know
 No interest now in aught below.
 Alas ! thy sadly languid air,
 The settled sorrow breathing there,
 Tells all—the pangs of love unkind,
 The broken heart it left behind.
 And now the beams that sometimes fling
 Unwonted light upon thy brow,
 Seem from no earthly source to spring ;
 For O ! 'tis like no light below—
 Ah no—'tis from a purer sphere,
 The first faint gleams of sunshine given,
 Even in this world of sorrow here,
 To those whose souls are fixed in heaven.
 Poor Isabel ! short time will bring
 That heavenly noon-day to thy breast,
 The dawn already seems to spring :
 Thy spirit shall at length be blest.

C.

To the EDITOR of the BELFAST MAGAZINE.

I HAVE often been led to reflect on the various momentary caprices or whims that have an extensive influence on the mind. I do not allude to those enviable mortals who can vegetate continually from week to week, without one shadow of a new idea passing across their stagnant brain ; nor of those perhaps not less happy, who, from inclination or unavoidable circumstances, are plunged in a circulation of thought and business ; where the mind hardly feels itself going round in the whirlpool—*Fortunati ambo !* There is another state equally remarkable ; to enjoy which a person must possess a little knowledge on all subjects, with a decided preference for none, or, what is the same, with a preference for all in turn : he must have a little imagination, a little ability, a little desire to improve, plenty of time before him, and a happy proneness to the feeling of ennui. Such a person stands a fair chance of wasting his hours, while no vestige of them remains but

regret. Some charming novelty, some interesting association, always turns up to divert him from the occupations in which he should be engaged. Every morning sees new plans and new resolutions that are whistled off to the winds before evening. But freedom, Sir, has charms; and there is certainly something very attractive in such butterfly flights among the paths of literature.

“ Still seeking flowers more rich and fair, as fickle fancy changes.”

But thorns lurk beneath the flowers—and let the wise man beware of lazy hours and mixed employment, without a determined plan of study.

I speak so feelingly on this subject, because sad experience has made it familiar to me; and my complaints are poured into your ear, because this rambling disposition has already withheld many intended tributes to your laudable efforts to raise the literary character of our Northern Athens. But the hours of reprieve to my indolence have passed away, and now for a peace-offering to my conscience, if you are pleased to accept of it—*Tamen accipe sivilis*. * * * *

So far I had written, by way of proœmium; and, resolved to execute my task, I retired last night to my chamber at an early hour—a comfortable fire in the grate, a jug of Hibernian nectar within reach, and my well filled snuff-box on the table before me; three requisites without which there can be no inspiration of genius. I seated myself on a huge philosophic chair. The long gloomy-looking candle on the chimney-piece, the formidable array of pen, ink, and paper that lay scattered before me, and the peaceful solitude so unusual with me, proclaimed too well the awful fact, that I was seated there—to write. I had much curiosity to see how some of my weathercock speculations would look amid the grave philosophy of the Belfast Magazine. I had “wound my courage to the sticking place,” and, after indulging in a few minutes’ laughter at the oddity of my situation, resolutely dipped my pen in the ink, and grasped a sheet of paper.—But what Deity was to deliver me of the sequel? As fate would have it, I had not predetermined what subject was to receive the illumination of my genius. Many old friends arose with equal claims to the honour; and the decision was a matter of no small difficulty. Should I write a tale—a sketch from nature—a philological research?—Should I take a touch at mathematics (there was some consolation in your last number,)—Should I fix upon one of the numberless points of Polemic Divinity; or should I enter into a metaphysical speculation on the spirit of religious controversy, (it is a painful subject in these times,) and endeavour to account, on philosophical

principles, for the singular fact, that a man professing the most intense anxiety for the salvation of his fellow-creatures, will yet most conscientiously and cheerfully kindle the faggot to roast those who venture to go in search of their salvation by a different path from himself? But "of metaphysical speculations and philosophy," said I, glancing at the punch-jug, "there has been enough already; and as for poetry,

'Mediocribus esse poetis, Non Dii, non homines, non concessere columnæ.'"

This was a step gained, but the matter was still dubious; and often did I recur to the jug, the snuff-box, and the poker, in the fidgets of indecision. At length a light gleamed upon me, and exultingly exclaiming "eureka," I rose and stirred the fire. Yet this was the most dangerous conjuncture possible. I thought that I had removed every attraction out of my way; but unfortunately one book still remained on the chimney-piece. Well, said I to myself, after reading a page or two, to give me spirits for engaging in my formidable task, I will set to instantly in good earnest. But I was soon over head and ears—pen, ink, paper, and Magazine were kicked to the bottom of the Red Sea; and when I arose from this mental inhumation, the low burned candle and greasy candlestick, the pen that lay dried before me, and the unwelcome sound of the clock as it struck one, proclaimed that it was time to bid good bye to Apollo, and court the arms of Morpheus.

There are few persons who, after such a misfortune, do not wish to find, and do not often succeed in finding, some ingenious device to quiet the qualms of conscience. In the present instance, however, I scarcely dared to try such an experiment; and I had killed two or three hours of this fine day, before I could summon courage to review the memorable events of yesterday evening. My logic, however, was soon at work.—I might have sunk into a fit of abstraction—it would be a most philosophic and romantic occurrence—But no; this would not do. When I retired to rest, the fire had been burning, and exhibited the marks of periodical stirring—the candle had not wanted snuffing—the jug was emptied—and I am no believer in automatic motions. Pooh! said I, it is the author's fault, not mine. If a worthy gentleman will sue so warmly and eloquently for a few hours' attention on my part, to hear what he has got to say for himself, it would be most inhuman and unchristian to deny him. There was something of solid benevolence in this reflection.—Sir—the truth is, for I must and will speak in vindication of my conduct, there is a tone of feeling and description in all our best modern writers, that makes it hard to escape their clutches. This character is not confined to a few solitary instances; it seems to pervade

the literature of the age. The public taste appears to have undergone a complete change ; and the whole tribe of poets, novelists, and magazine writers seem to have caught the infection. The admiration excited by our veteran writers of some hundred years' standing, is justly boundless. But too much admiration is often inconsistent with the comfortable avidity with which one would like to devour a book. In perusing the classic pages of early British literature, the mind is so fascinated by the magnificent conceptions and splendid imagery, coming upon it with such overpowering rapidity, that we find our progress most provokingly retarded, and sometimes altogether impeded. After all our glitter and polish and fancy work, we are compelled to acknowledge, that for the divine spirit of poetry, we can produce little in the present day to compare with the splendid monuments of the genius which illumined the opening of the 17th century. Might not such names as Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton,—aye, and we might add, Bacon and Taylor and Hooker, not to mention others of later date, over whose writings are thickly spread the richest colourings of poetry—might not these giants of British literature cause their successors in modern times to “hide their diminished heads,” and shrink into comparative insignificance? But, in justice to our unfortunate contemporaries, we must observe, that these ancient votaries of the Muses had richer and rarer presents with which to court the favour of their mistresses ; and female hearts are seldom insensible to such offerings. Nor can we blame these worthy old gallants for selecting from the boundless field of unexplored beauties, such decorations as would with more certainty attract the notice and favour of the fair objects of their adoration. From the abundant profusion of these costly ornaments, there frequently resulted much carelessness in the selection, and little elegance in the mode of presenting them : the natural consequence of which was, that the haughty nymphs of Parnassus returned the negligence of their vassals with scorn, and withdrew their smiles from them for a season. With us, however, albeit unaccustomed to such offerings, there is no danger of these writers meeting with a repulse. We can still gaze with admiration on the metal, although much of the rude ore be occasionally attached to it. The spirited old gentlemen did not condescend to search the records of antiquity, for rules by which they were to be guided in their visits to Parnassus ; nor had they any master of ceremonies to overlook their gestures, and regulate their movements. With that spirit of independence, which is of genuine British growth, they disclaimed the arbitrary enactments of foreign courts of criticism, and reposed with the most undoubting confidence on

their own good sense, and downright straight forward sincerity. But the daughters of Apollo are not more free from the spirit of coquetry, than other ladies. French wit, and airs, and graces, which Charles II. imported in his train, with sundry other more objectionable attendants, contrived to displace the solid and sterling qualities of their predecessors, from the high seat which they had hitherto occupied. Dryden, and Prior, and Pope, were chiefly influential in establishing the supremacy of the French school. But I find, Sir, I am becoming insupportably dull; I have not yet recovered the sleepy effects of last night's potation—Well then, to hasten to a close—we have thus seen, Sir, our English literature in its earlier years, assume a grave and dignified appearance, and stalk forth with all the virtues, and a few of the defects, which could not fail to accompany the consciousness of its own intrinsic merit. We have seen it in its subsequent career, stooping from its high situation, condescending to borrow the adventitious aid of external decoration, and adopting much of that easy and unrestrained gracefulness of manner, and fine polish of sentiment, for which the French style of that age was so eminently distinguished: although it may be fairly questioned, whether the vigour of the national genius was not relaxed, amidst this accession of foreign wit and polish. It is unquestionable, however, that the writers of both these periods, have exhibited traits of the most powerful genius, irradiated with the highest beams of fancy, and borrowing largely from the rich store-house of materials, which Nature has provided for her votaries. These great men have established their own fame on an imperishable basis, and at the same time have left a task of no ordinary difficulty, to those of their posterity, who should aim at originality. Our natural genius has been obliged to assume a new character, more humble, it is true, but not less interesting. We cannot look for the massive dignity of Epic Poetry, nor for those lofty exertions of intellect, which rest their sole claims to admiration on the naked grandeur of the sentiment; but there is one quality, of which we may boast as peculiarly our own—I allude to the accurate delineation which modern poetry gives, of the manners, and incidents, and feelings of social life.—The great outlines of physical and moral nature, had already been sketched by faithful and powerful hands—the minute shading, the graceful and delicate colouring, were still wanting to complete the picture. The efforts of contemporary writers, both in prose and verse, are accordingly directed to the evolution of character, and the minuter occurrences of human life. They take delight in scrutinizing the inward workings of the heart—in laying hold of some particular

character, dissecting its component features, and exhibiting their singular combinations. They frequently trace with masterly skill, the influence of some predominant passion upon the habits of thinking and acting in the individual; and we are deeply interested, nay, perhaps not a little gratified, in finding all our long cherished habits, our favourite pursuits, our prejudices, or even our weaknesses, thus accurately portrayed, through all their shades and modifications. Nor does this anatomy of human feelings, require the highest order of intellect to accomplish; but it may be effected even by inferior talent, if accompanied with habits of quick observation, great sensibility, and a vigorous and happy style of expression. Highly, however, as we may be disposed to admire our own ingenuity, for discovering a new field of poetical exertion, and for the achievements that have been performed in it; candour obliges us to acknowledge, that even here we are anticipated, by that great painter of human passions, Shakespeare—

“The Orator—Dramatist—Minstrel—who ran
Through each tone of the lyre—and was
Master of all.”

But let it be our glory to follow in the steps of so great a master.

It is consolatory to reflect, that the spirit we have described as peculiar to the present age, is indicative of the progress of the human mind.—In the first ages of society, such poetry could not have had existence—the circumstances of social life were not so fully developed—human life was not so dignified. But as a new number of the *Westminster Review* has just made its appearance upon my table, to which my thoughts and eyes have been most wistfully directed for some minutes, I shall not hazard any more observations, Sir, at present; but conclude, by promising you the result of some of my future cogitations, should your reception of this paper hold out to me any encouragement.

NON-NEMO.

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

Night's sable mantle shades the skies,
And silence holds her awful reign;
And weary man in sleep enjoys
A short release from every pain.
O how like death this sleep appears!
When all our worldly sorrows cease,
And earthly hopes, and earthly fears
Seem hush'd in never-breaking peace!
Yet how unlike!—To-morrow's light
Wakes man again to mortal strife;

But after death's short transient night
He starts into an endless life.
And who can say, if dark or bright
That morn eternal shall arise:
If heavenly splendours bless our sight,
Or hell's dark horrors meet our eyes!
How blest, that Christian Hope has power,
To cheer the dreary gloom of death;
And in the darkest saddest hour,
Still shines the eternal star of Faith.

C.